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SUBJECT: TRAVEL TO IRAQ FROM JORDAN: NEW HACC CHARTER
FLIGHT ADDS OPTION

REF: AMMAN 4535

1. (U) Post has received multiple inquiries about travel to Iraq by way of Jordan, and is in planning stages for the creation of a logistics center to assist USG personnel transiting Jordan en route to Iraq. As this logistics center is not yet operational, the Embassy wishes to supply the Department and all other interested USG personnel with information on current options for travel from Jordan to Iraq. In the future, the Embassy plans to send out regular updates of this information giving any significant changes in travel options. Particularly notable changes of the past two weeks include a cutback of UN flights to Iraq and the establishment of a regular Amman-Baghdad charter flight intended primarily for U.S., CPA, and Iraqi personnel.

AIR TRANSPORT

2. (U) There are currently three different ways to travel from Amman to Baghdad by air. All three leave from Marka Airport, located in downtown Amman, about 25 miles from Queen Alia International Airport. One began service recently, while two others have been established since the beginning of the summer (see reftel). The Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Center (HACC) in Amman, in partnership with Royal Jordanian Airlines initiated a charter flight from Amman to Baghdad on August 18. A 48-seat airplane departs Marka Airport at 0800 and arrives in Baghdad at 1100 on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Return flights depart Baghdad at 1230 and arrive in Amman by 1400 on those same days. This flight is available for two categories of travelers. DOD and CPA personnel, personnel of the U.S. and coalition governments, and officials of Iraqi ministries will be charged USD 50 one-way and USD 100 round-trip. Authorized USAID, CPA, and DOD contractors, personnel from the UN and humanitarian organizations, and non-coalition diplomats will be charged USD 350 one-way and USD 600 round-trip for the flight. Passengers are limited to 20 kilos of baggage and will be charged USD 5 per kilo for excess baggage. In Baghdad, CusterBattles offers a land transport service in conjunction with flight arrival and departure times that runs between the airport, the Republican Palace, the Palestine and Sheraton hotels, and the IAC/Al-Rasheed. Travelers may register for this flight from Amman or get more information about it by contacting LTC Chuck Litzelman of HACC-Amman at 962-77-485-998 or by e-mail at ChuckLitz@hotmail.com. Upon approval by HACC, or with valid identification certifying membership in one of the above categories of authorized travelers, passengers will purchase tickets for a flight directly from Royal Jordanian Airlines.

3. (U) A second air option is offered by the USAID grantee AirServ, which is operating 14-seat aircraft into Baghdad twice a day on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and once a day on Tuesday. Flights from Amman on Sunday and Wednesday also fly to Erbil, and on Monday and Thursday also fly to Basra. (This schedule will be valid throughout September.) USAID personnel fly free of charge on this flight. Personnel of USAID implementing partners and unaffiliated humanitarian NGOs are charged USD 165 for a one-way ticket to Baghdad, with extra charges to continue to Basra and Erbil. USG personnel other than USAID, personnel of foreign governments, and members of other organizations and corporations not affiliated with USAID may use these flights if space is available, and are charged USD 660 for a one-way ticket to Baghdad, with extra charges for Basra and Erbil. Passengers may carry no more than 20 kilos of luggage; excess baggage will be carried at an additional charge if there is room. In Baghdad, AirServ does not offer ground transportation from the airport; passengers will need to make their own arrangements for such transportation. Persons wishing to register for this flight, obtain a full flight schedule, or find out further information may do so by contacting the AirServ booking office at 962-79-694-1365 or by e-mail at Jordan@airserv.org

4. (U) UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) flights are a third option for air transport from Amman to Baghdad. The UN is currently operating four aircraft flying at different

times between Amman and Baghdad, as well as to other destinations in Iraq and in neighboring countries. According to the current flight schedule, there is at least one flight a day from Amman to Baghdad and back from Sunday to Thursday, with frequent additional stops in Erbil, and occasionally an additional stop in Basra. The recent drawdown of UN personnel in Iraq has meant that the schedule is subject to change on a day-to-day basis, depending upon the needs of the UN. It also likely will mean a substantial decrease in flights into Iraq in the near future, after the last of the UN staff evacuations have been completed. Current schedules may be obtained by contacting UNHAS at 962-79-666-9947 or by e-mail at rabie.allouh@wfp.org. Seats on the UN flight are available free of charge to two tiers of passengers, with UN personnel given priority. If space is available, members of humanitarian NGOs operating in support of the UN mission to Iraq and high-level (First Secretary and above) diplomatic personnel on official travel related to humanitarian work in Iraq may also use the aircraft free of charge, on a first-come, first-served basis. If space remains after these two categories of passengers have been fully served, other governmental personnel may be able to obtain seats on the flight subject if clearance is granted from the office of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq. Passengers are limited to a maximum of 25 kilos of luggage, although this amount may be limited even further, based on the needs of the UN. In Baghdad, the UN is offering land transport between the airport and the Canal Hotel, timed with the arrival and departure schedule. Passengers for UNHAS flights cannot register by telephone; booking requests must be placed by e-mail to iraq.unhas@wfp.org. Further information on UNHAS booking procedures, regulations, and points of contact may be obtained at www.unjlc.org

LAND TRANSPORT

15. (U) Personnel unable to obtain seating on one of the three flights may wish to travel overland to Baghdad, although the Embassy does not repeat not recommend this route. The drive from Amman to Baghdad is approximately nine hours during daylight. Jordanian taxis may be chartered from Amman to Baghdad, usually for a fee of USD 300-500. These services include Abu Al Hal, telephone 962-6-462-1642, and Al Nasser, telephone 962-6-463-6952. Armed escorts may be hired in Amman from security firms for an additional USD 1000-1500. There have been few/no attacks on vehicle traffic along this route (Iraqi Highway 1) between the Jordanian border and the Iraqi town of Ar-Rutba. From Ar-Rutba to Baghdad (and especially between Ramadi and Baghdad), HWY 1 is subject to strong USG and UN travel advisories, as vehicles up to and including armored convoys have been attacked both at night and during daylight hours. As the frequency of armed attacks is lowest during the morning daylight hours, taxi services tend to depart at around midnight from Amman in order to arrive at the highest-risk area during those hours. CPA Ministry of Interior has several active and passive efforts underway to combat threats to travelers in this area.

OTHER LOGISTICAL REQUIREMENTS

16. (SBU) There are no visa requirements for entry into Iraq; travelers to Iraq crossing the land border must pay a fee equivalent to approx. 40 US cents. Jordanian compliance with CPA Order 16 (signed June 27, 2003) requesting that foreign governments honor expired Iraqi passports less than four years out of date, has been spotty. Jordan does not require visas for Iraqi passport holders; however, it has turned away many Iraqis at the port of entry. Jordan does require visas for US and EU passport holders, which may be purchased for JD 18/USD 25 upon arrival in Jordan. USG employees are reminded to consult the Foreign Visitors Guide for information on official notification procedures for traveling to Jordan.

GNEHM